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FM AMCONSUL KOLKATA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1493
INFO RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 1409
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI 0619
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI 0613
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 0393
RUEHGO/AMEMBASSY RANGOON 0253
RUEHCHI/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI 0022
RUEHBK/AMEMBASSY BANGKOK 0159
RUEHKL/AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR 0023
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 0399
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 0320
RHHJJPI/PACOM IDHS HONOLULU HI
RUEAUSA/DEPT OF HHS WASHINGTON DC
RUEHPH/CDC CDC ATLANTA GA PRIORITY
RUEIDN/DNI WASHINGTON DC
RUEHRC/USDA FAS WASHDC
RUEHC/USAID WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA 1841

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 KOLKATA 000116

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
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HHS PLEASE PASS NIH
HHS FOR WSTEIGER/DBELL/BHAT
NIH FOR RGLASS/TMAMPILLY
CDC FOR SBLOUNT/NCOX
USDA/W FOR APHIS/DEHAVEN AND FAS/WBRANT/CRADLER

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EAGR](#) [TBIO](#) [KFLU](#) [CASC](#) [EAID](#) [AMED](#) [PGOV](#) [IN](#) [BM](#) [BG](#)

SUBJECT: EASTERN INDIA ALERT TO AVIAN INFLUENZA RISK FOLLOWING
OUTBREAKS IN BANGLADESH AND BURMA

REF: A. A) RANGOON 00315

D) DHAKA 00569

[1](#)B. B) RANGOON 00304

E) DHAKA 00533

[1](#)C. C) RANGOON 00287

F) DHAKA 00480

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: With the recent reported cases of Avian Influenza (AI) in Bangladesh and Burma, neighboring Indian states have alerted officials to monitor for possible outbreaks and have banned imports of poultry products from those two countries (reftels). On April 7, the "Hindustan Times" reported that approximately 1,000 chickens died at a poultry farm in West Bengal. However, there has been no confirmation that those deaths are AI-related and they could be attributed to any number of causes, including the recent over 100 degree Fahrenheit temperatures. End Summary.

Eastern India Responds to AI Concerns

[1](#)2. (SBU) In West Bengal, the Animal Resources Department (ARD) received an alert notice from the GOI Home Ministry about AI incidents in Burma and Bangladesh. The Government of West Bengal (GOWB) has set up control rooms in nine districts bordering Bangladesh.

13. (SBU) An April 7 newspaper article, quoting the Chief Medical Officer of North 24 Parganas district, said that nearly 1,000 poultry died at a place called Gaighata. When this was reported to the federal Agriculture Ministry, a team of officials, led by national Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Health Commissioner S.K. Bandyopadhyay, went to the district on the border with Bangladesh to investigate. However, our contacts in the state ARD maintain that they have no report of unusual poultry deaths in Gaighata or anywhere in West Bengal, reflecting a possible disconnect between the state health offices and the state ARD. The contact told post that the national ARD team along with its state counterpart and the district administration were inspecting the border areas in view of the heightened surveillance, after Bangladesh and Burma confirmed AI outbreaks. The team was checking trade consignments to and from Bangladesh as India has halted poultry and livestock trade with its neighbor.

Northeast Also on Alert

14. (U) The India's Northeastern states located between Bangladesh and Burma are also increasing their AI surveillance.

1A. (SBU) Assam: The Assam government directed districts bordering Bangladesh to restrict the movement of poultry products and poultry feed from across the border. The Director of Veterinary Services has ordered all district veterinary officers to ensure round-the-clock vigil in hatcheries, rural

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households and riverine routes along the border to prevent the import of poultry products. District authorities have been directed to collect serum and faecal samples of poultry regularly in the area falling within 20 km of the international border. The deputy commissioners of border districts have also been directed to keep a strict watch on the situation

1B. (SBU) Meghalaya: The Meghalaya government constituted a task force to monitor cases of bird flu in the State. All seven border districts are under the authority of the task force. According to the Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Department Commissioner and Secretary P. Naik, Meghalaya would set up check points to prevent import of poultry into the state along the 423 kilometer border. "Import of poultry products from Bangladesh has been barred in Meghalaya," Naik said and noting that other States in the region have also banned the import of poultry from Bangladesh and Myanmar. "Adequate precautionary measures were being undertaken and there was nothing to panic," he added. The task force would conduct surveillance, early detection and vaccination programs. The veterinary department has conducted examinations in the markets.

1C. (SBU) Tripura: Contacts in industry associations have reported no unusual poultry deaths. There is a ban already in place on poultry and meat imports from Bangladesh. Post's contact in the Tripura Animal Resources Department said that the state government has alerted the Border Security Force (BSF) and other security agencies to be alert so that no meat or poultry are smuggled into the state. The contact indicated that contrary to alarmist press reports, there was no panic among people. He asked if we could provide 1,000 copies of the AI manual issued by the GOI in Bengali for distribution among his staff. The state government has said it has no resources to print 1,000 copies of the AI manual.

1D. (SBU) Manipur: The State Veterinary Department has instituted a ban on import of livestock, especially chicken and eggs, from Burma through the border town of Moreh. Director of

Veterinary and Animal Husbandry Dr T.H. Debendra said that state authorities have issued instructions to the army, paramilitary forces, police as well as the district administration to monitor import of poultry products following confirmation of the outbreak in Burma and Bangladesh. According to press reports, the Director further said that as part of the ongoing surveillance work, 122 Avian Sero samples, including one from a migratory bird have been collected from Bishnupur, Ukhrul, Churachandpur, Chandel, Imphal East and Imphal West districts of Manipur. On March 28, these samples were sent to the High Security Risk Animal Disease Laboratory in Bhopal. (Note: Embassy Health Attache was informed that the Bhopal has received a large number of poultry specimens for H5N1 testing. It is not clear if this increase in samples is due to greater surveillance as ordered by the Ministry of Agriculture or results from more samples from dead birds. End Note.) The Debendra also appealed to the public to report immediately if they come across any suspected cases of bird flu and to help in collecting samples. The Department is scheduled to publish books and pamphlets providing detailed information on the disease for disseminating to the public. Deputy Director of Veterinary Dr S. Thoiba Singh with security forces has been conducting routine checks as well.

1E. (SBU) Mizoram: The Administrator of Champai district, which is located 210 km from the state capital of Aizawl and borders Burma, (it has a trading post at Zokhawtar) said that he also received an AI alert from the GOI home ministry about 15 days prior to the AI outbreak in Burma and Bangladesh. He has imposed prohibitory orders on the import of poultry and raw meat from Burma. The ARD department in Mizoram has not reported any

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poultry deaths.

1F. (U) Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh: These states as well have been put on alert and have been monitoring for possible AI outbreaks.

15. (SBU) COMMENT: The press report of bird deaths in West Bengal indicates a lack of coordination and the absence of a clearly defined chain of command among different agencies involved in the surveillance and detection of AI. Apparently, the West Bengal Health Department officials "heard" about the poultry deaths but informed GOI agricultural ministry in Delhi, rather than contacting the state ARD office which is responsible for monitoring AI in the state. The Northeastern states are also aware of the AI threat but appear to have limited resources and capacity to cover the thousands of kilometers of border with Bangladesh and Burma.

JARDINE